

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

## Washington Partnerships Receive \$150,000 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$150,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **three projects** in the **State of Washington**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

### Island Center Marsh Acquisition Project

Puget Sound's Vashon-Maury Island, located in **King County** in **Congressional District 7**, is surrounded by the metropolitan areas of Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, and Bremerton. The island is just over 24,000 acres and supports a population of approximately 11,000. Easy ferry access from Seattle, Tacoma, and Bremerton has increased development pressures on this rural island. As a result, wetland habitat has been lost, forest stands have been reduced and isolated, and migratory and resident bird populations are experiencing decreased opportunities to find food and shelter.

The Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust (Trust), King County, Vashon-Maury Island Audubon Society, Amiad & Associates, and two individuals, Gary Christopherson and Steve Able, will use their **\$50,000** grant and **\$430,000** in matching funds to purchase a 30-acre parcel to preserve the 4.6-acre Island Center Marsh and its surrounding habitats. This project is the first phase of a multiphased project to preserve 343 acres in the heart of the island.

The project area contains some of the best freshwater wetland habitat on the island. **Pacific Flyway** mallard and wood duck breed here, and ring-necked duck and American wigeon use the pond as a winter foraging area from mid-October through April. A number of Northern Pacific Rainforest Bird Conservation Region priority species occur here: rufous hummingbird; olive-sided, willow, and Pacific-slope flycatchers; northern rough-winged swallow; and black-throated gray warbler. The parcel's wetlands also feed the headwaters of Judd Creek, a spawning stream for chum and coho salmon—the latter of which is a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The partners' work will support the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Conservation Plan's **Pacific Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Tom Dean, Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust, [tom@vashonlandtrust.org](mailto:tom@vashonlandtrust.org), (206) 463-2644, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1794.

### Sares Bluff Conservation Project

Population growth and its associated land development continue to adversely impact regional natural areas and agricultural lands throughout the Puget

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Trough. The Sares Bluff Property on Fidalgo Island, located in **Skagit County in Congressional District 2**, presents project partners with an opportunity to protect an intact natural area with important conservation values and functions. Partners will preserve a critical buffer transition zone along the western edge of a 7-acre beaver pond marsh system that supports nesting and wintering waterfowl; will expand the county's Sharpe Park by 37 acres (19.8 wetlands acres), creating a 110-acre permanently preserved natural area with more than 4,200 feet of pristine marine shoreline; and will protect a high-quality forested wetland and associated riparian corridor from the marsh to the marine shoreline.

Preservation of Sares Bluff will benefit nesting, migrating, and wintering waterfowl that use Sharpe Park marsh: for example, mallard, wood duck, harlequin duck, ring-necked duck, bufflehead, hooded merganser, and lesser scaup. The federally and state-listed bald eagle hunts on the marsh, as well as along the shoreline. State species of concern that will benefit include great blue heron, osprey, pileated woodpecker, and tufted puffin. The property's marine coast, rock bluffs, pocket beaches, and extensive near-shore kelp reefs provide forage sites for such species as black oystercatcher, rhinoceros auklet, and an array of pelagic species that inhabit Rosario Strait and the scattered off-shore islands and rocks. This project also will benefit human populations by helping to maintain the area's water quality.

The San Juan Preservation Trust, Skagit County Department of Parks and Recreation, Washington Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, Shell Puget Sound Refinery, Islands Fund, Tesoro Northwest Company, Anacortes Parks Foundation, and several anonymous individuals matched their **\$50,000** grant with **\$1,050,000** to achieve their conservation goals. Their efforts also will contribute to the habitat conservation goals of the Northern Pacific Rainforest Bird Conservation Region and the **Pacific Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Mike Cooper, The San Juan Preservation Trust, [mcooper@sjpt.org](mailto:mcooper@sjpt.org), (360) 468-3202, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

### **Skidmore Slough Estuarine Wetlands Conservation Project**

More than 6,000 acres (50 percent) of Willapa Bay's salt marsh have been degraded by diking, tide gates, filling, and construction. Over the past 30 years, nonnative cordgrass has infested an additional 20,000 acres of mudflat/salt marsh, converting them to grass pastures, and commercial forestry has logged all shoreline areas. This project is part of a larger effort to acquire and restore at least 150 acres of wetlands and associated uplands along the intertidal Skidmore Slough in **Pacific County in Congressional District 3**.

Using their grant **\$50,000** grant and **\$92,320** in matching funds, Sportsmen's National Land Trust, Monty Johnson and Kodiak LLC, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and Washington Department of Ecology will purchase approximately 11 acres of salt marsh and associated uplands adjacent to the slough. Their restoration activities will include the deconstruction of 1,800 feet of road, removal of 800 cubic yards of wetland fill, planting of trees and shrubs, removal of failing stream crossings and fences, and restoration of tidal hydrology to the marsh.

The Willapa Bay wetlands, which include Skidmore Slough, are used by approximately 150,000 shorebirds and 100,000 waterfowl during their annual **Pacific Flyway** migrations. In addition, coastal cutthroat trout and coho, Chinook, and chum salmon use these waters. This project also supports **Pacific Coast Joint Venture** goals.

For more information about this project, contact Tom Gibbons, Sportsmen's National Land Trust, [middlepalix@mindspring.com](mailto:middlepalix@mindspring.com), (360) 943-3529, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.